

COVER SHEET

Responsible Agency: U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Fossil Energy (FE)

Title: Tucson Electric Power Company (TEP) Sahuarita–Nogales Transmission Line Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

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Abstract: A DOE Presidential Permit is required before anyone can construct an electric transmission line across the U.S. border. On August 17, 2000, TEP applied to DOE/FE for a Presidential Permit to construct a double-circuit 345,000 volt (345 kV) electric transmission line that would begin south of Tucson, Arizona, in the vicinity of Sahuarita, cross the U.S.-Mexico border, and continue into the Sonoran region of northern Mexico to Santa Ana. TEP states that the proposed line would provide a redundant path for the energy that is currently transmitted over the existing 115-kV transmission line from Tucson to Nogales, Arizona. The local Nogales utility, Citizens Communications, has committed to the purchase of 100 MW of transmission capacity from TEP to allow for future load growth above Citizen's current Santa Cruz County load of approximately 65 MW. TEP anticipates using the remaining 400 MW of capability for transport of energy between the United States and Mexico.

FE has determined that the issuance of a Presidential Permit for this project would constitute a major Federal action within the meaning of the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969* as amended. The *Federal Register Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS and to Conduct Public Scoping Meetings and Notice of Floodplain and Wetlands Involvement* was published on July 10, 2001 (66 FR 35950). Public scoping meetings were held by DOE on July 30, 2001, at the Rancho Resort in Sahuarita, AZ, and on July 31, 2001, at the Rio Rico Resort in Rio Rico, AZ.

FE has prepared this Draft EIS to address the environmental impacts of the proposed action and reasonable alternatives, including the "No Action" alternative. In addition, because the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. International Boundary Water Commission (USIBWC) must act, and because their actions are interrelated, they have agreed to cooperate in preparing this Draft EIS. The Final EIS will be used by DOE and the cooperating agency officials to ensure that they have the information needed for purposes of informed decision-making. The decisions themselves will be issued subsequent to the Final EIS, in the form of a Record of Decision for each agency, or as a letter of concurrence in the case of the USIBWC.